

Growers urged to get involved in local agencies' groundwater plans

By **TIM HEARDEN**
Capital Press

SACRAMENTO—Growers worried about the impact of new state groundwater regulations should get involved in local agencies' discussions about how to implement them, a state water official advises.

Landowners can check the California Department of Water Resources' website to track which agency is developing a groundwater sustainability plan in their area and how it's coming along, said Trevor Joseph, the DWR's sustainable groundwater management section chief.

"As a grower you might be interested certainly in which agency is going to represent your area" in implementing the 2014 Sustainable Groundwater Management Act, Joseph said in a March 24 webinar.

He added that landowners will be able to enter their street address and be directed to their local Groundwater Sustainability Agency. Such agencies must be identified in the state's most important or troubled basins by the middle of next year.

"Ultimately, this groundwater (effort) is best accomplished locally," Joseph said,

Online
For more information about the regulations, visit <http://groundwater.ca.gov>.

adding that the state's role will be limited.

The webinar came amid a week of public meetings at which DWR officials presented technical information about how the sweeping new groundwater regulations will be put into effect and to gather input.

The DWR was also taking written comments through April 1 on emergency regulations to quickly

implement the plan.

During the webinar, Joseph and other water regulators first gave technical details of how they will evaluate local plans and then took questions and comments. One domestic well owner said she attended two local meetings that offered little opportunity for input and suggested the state consider an agency's public outreach efforts when evaluating its plan.

Keith Freitas, a San Joaquin Valley grower, said he was concerned about the regulations' impact on water rights.

"I'm wondering how the

state environmental agency plans to protect the sustainability of small family farms under the emergency regulation and under the code itself and the act itself," Freitas said.

Woodland city public works director Greg Meyer lamented that the emergency regulations put some burdens on local agencies that may be unnecessary and could drive up costs.

"I'm concerned the proscriptive nature of the document is going to lose the local-control nature of what the original intent of the act was," Meyer said.

Others said that agencies that oversee important but healthy groundwater basins face the same required investments and other efforts as agencies in basins that are overdrafted, creating a "one-size-fits-all" approach.

Under a series of bills passed in 2014, sustainability plans for the 21 most critically overdrafted basins must be in place by 2020, while plans for other high- and medium-priority basins must be established by 2022 and sustainability in all high- and medium-priority basins must be achieved by 2040.

U.S. hop stocks up 10 percent over year ago

By **DAN WHEAT**
Capital Press

YAKIMA, Wash. — A 10 percent increase in the inventory of U.S. hops over a year ago shows production is doing better toward meeting demand, an official of a leading hop company says.

Hop supplies have been tight for several years even as U.S. hop acreage, predominantly in Washington state,

has increased considerably in response to increased demand from the growing craft beer market.

The latest stock report indicates supply continues to keep up with demand "although we have not yet achieved the desired breathing room in the supply chain, in particular with many of the high-demand aroma varieties," said Pete Mahoney, director of supply chain

management and purchasing for John I. Haas, a leader in hop production, processing, research and development.

The USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service issued a report March 21 stating the U.S. held 131 million pounds of hops on March 1, up 10 percent from 119 million a year earlier.

Stocks held by growers and dealers were up 16 percent at 88 million pounds while inventory of brewers was unchanged at 43 million pounds.

Oil from hop cones is used to flavor and stabilize beer.

Just last Sept. 1 U.S. stocks were down 8 percent from a year earlier. That reflected an oversupply of alpha hops coming down to more normal levels while some aroma varieties were sold out, Ann George, administrator of Hop Growers of America and the Washing-

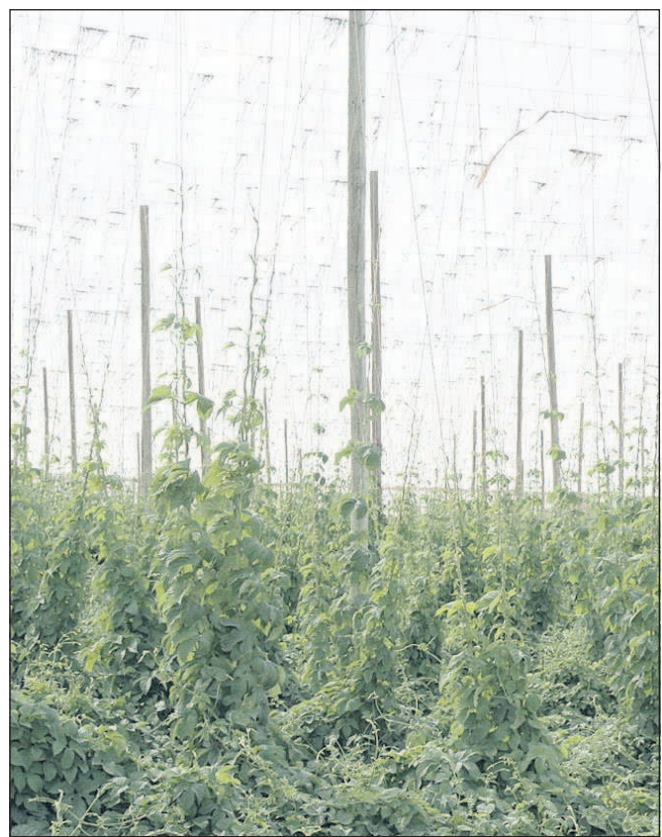
ton Hop Commission, both in Moxee, said at the time.

While U.S. production rose 11 percent in 2015, German and worldwide production was down.

George said a small part of the March 1 increase could be that more of the expanding number of smaller dealers and brewers are reporting to NASS. She said she believes acreage will continue to expand this year at about a "solid 10 percent."

Expansion continues to occur around Moxee near Yakima and in the lower Yakima Valley, Idaho and Oregon. Michigan likely will pass 1,000 acres this year, she said.

Mahoney said brewers have done more forward contracting because of tight hop supplies. Typically, smaller brewers run with a leaner cushion of supply while larger brewers sometimes carry up to a year's worth of supply, he said.



Dan Wheat/Capital Press
Hops vines are seen growing last May 20 near Benton City, Wash. U.S. hop stocks are up, according to a new report.

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Idaho Supreme Court water ruling supports Rangen trim line

By **JOHN O'CONNELL**
Capital Press

BOISE — Water law experts say a March 23 Idaho Supreme Court ruling regarding the Rangen Inc. water call

reaffirms the importance of putting the state's water to its maximum beneficial use, setting a precedent that could limit the scope of future calls.

Rangen, a Hagerman trout farm, filed its call in 2011. In January of 2014, Idaho Department of Water Resources Director Gary Spackman ruled in Rangen's favor, deciding that irrigation by junior groundwater users within the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer had reduced flows from the spring that supplies the trout farm's water.

But Spackman applied a so-called trim line, restricting the call to 157,000 acres in which curtailment of wells would result in a significant increase to Rangen's flows. Spackman set the trim line at a volcanic feature known as the Great Rift, crossing the aquifer downstream of American Falls Reservoir, noting

curtailment of 322,000 acres to the east would result in only 1.5 cubic feet per second of additional water reaching Rangen's spring.

A district judge later overturned Spackman's use of the trim line, reasoning it ran contrary to the Idaho concept of "first in time, first in right," and applied the call to the entire area of common groundwater.

The Supreme Court's recent 3-2 decision found Spackman was justified in using a trim line to ensure maximum beneficial use of the state's water and to account for uncertainty in the department's groundwater model.

"The director concluded there is a point where Rangen's delivery call would require curtailment of vastly more acreage to produce a very small increment of additional water, and at this point,

Rangen's right to seek additional curtailment must give way to the public's interest in optimum development of the state's water resources," the ruling explains.

Idaho Ground Water Appropriators Executive Director Lynn Tominaga said the ruling means his organization won't have to add an additional 1.5 cfs to the 9 cfs of spring water it's currently delivering to Rangen through a pipeline for mitigation.

Tominaga also believes the ruling's precedent "gives a lot of discretion to the director in terms of who can be involved or not involved with a delivery call."

Rangen attorney Fritz Haemmerle declined to comment on specific details of the case, noting two additional issues on appeal are scheduled for oral arguments before the Supreme Court on April 4.

Preliminary route for B2H line pushed farther south

By **GEORGE PLAVEN**
EO Media Group

A final Environmental Impact Statement on the proposed Boardman, Ore., to Hemingway, Idaho, transmission line won't be released until later this summer, but at least one potential route shows the Bureau of Land Management is heeding local concerns

in Oregon's Umatilla and Morrow counties.

The BLM updated its preliminary preferred alternative for the 300-mile line, which reflects two major changes sought by the counties: first, the line in Morrow County was shifted onto the west side of Bombing Range Road south of Boardman, onto Navy land as opposed to high-value farms

across the road. Second, the alignment was pushed farther south through Umatilla County in order to avoid impacting additional farmland where growers worried the line could take acres of crops out of production.

Tamara Gertsch, national project manager for the BLM, said they are continuing to work with all agencies, including the counties, and haven't made any final decisions yet. But the preliminary preferred alternative does provide a glimpse into the route analysis so far.

"There's no such thing as a route without impacts. That's just the way it is," Gertsch said. "It's a balancing act to do the best thing that we can to eliminate most impacts with our cooperating agencies."

Boardman to Hemingway, proposed by Idaho Power, is a 500-kilovolt line that would run from just outside Boardman to Melba, Idaho, near Boise. It would allow the two regions to share electricity during times of peak demand. Estimates for the project have ranged between \$890-\$940 million.

A draft EIS was released in 2014, and the BLM continues to analyze comments that were submitted from the public. The final EIS will include analysis of the agency preferred route and alternatives. Once it is issued the public will have 30 days to review and provide additional comments.

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